

CURRENT LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. **(Original)** A method of differentiating progenitor cells, comprising the steps of:
 - (a) contacting said progenitor cells with a differentiating agent; and
 - (b) introducing into said progenitor cells a nucleic acid molecule encoding a MEF2 polypeptide or an active fragment thereof,thereby differentiating said progenitor cells to produce a cell population containing protected neuronal cells.
2. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said MEF2 polypeptide is human MEF2C, or an active fragment thereof.
3. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said MEF2 polypeptide is constitutively active.
4. **(Original)** The method of claim 3, wherein said constitutively active MEF2 polypeptide is a MEF2/VP16 fusion protein.
5. **(Original)** The method of claim 3, wherein said constitutively active MEF2 polypeptide contains one or more serine/threonine to aspartic acid/glutamic acid substitutions in the MEF2 transactivation domain.
6. **(Original)** The method of claim 1 or claim 3, further comprising inhibiting caspase activity in said progenitor cells.
7. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said progenitor cells are human stem cells.
8. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said progenitor cells are embryonic stem cells.
9. **(Original)** The method of claim 8, wherein said embryonic stem cells are human embryonic stem cells.

10. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said progenitor cells are hematopoietic progenitor cells.
11. **(Original)** The method of claim 10, wherein said hematopoietic progenitor cells are human hematopoietic progenitor cells.
12. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD133-positive human progenitor cells.
13. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD133-positive/CD34-positive human progenitor cells.
14. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD133-positive/CD34-negative human progenitor cells.
15. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD133-positive/CD34-negative/CD45-negative human progenitor cells.
16. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD34-negative/CD38-negative/Lin-negative human progenitor cells.
17. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting CD34-positive/CD38-negative/Lin-negative/ Thy-1-negative human progenitor cells.
18. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said differentiating agent is retinoic acid.
19. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said differentiating agent is selected from the group consisting of neurotrophic factor 3, epidermal growth factor, insulin-like growth factor 1 and a platelet-derived growth factor.
20. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein said population containing protected neuronal cells comprises at least 50% neuronal cells.

Claims 21 – 57 (Canceled)

58. **(Previously presented)** The method of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is stably introduced into said progenitor cells.